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THE STRANGER'S CALL

An Incident That Interested the Miner, at Homestek Digglors. There were about two hundred men of us at Homesick Diggings, and it was the hour of noon on a summer's day when hig Jim Davis came over the hill with his pack on his back and stallord out a cinim. He came alone, and that was why we noticed him so particularly. He seemed to fight shy of us for three or four days, and that is why we won dered if he was all right. Big Jim had got a squint at the face of every man in samp before he thanvest out and became social. In a little time we found him to be a good fellow, and so we gradualr came to forget our first suspicious We were still agreed, however, that there was something queer about blan. He appared anxious and perturbed whenever a new arrival was attremuced, and if a party of half a dozen came along Jim would go into tiding until he had sheet than up. It was as if he suspected some one was trailing him

There were all some of mon in the mining camps in the sidays, and it was the rule to mind your own business. As long us a money obeyed the rules and rogulations had down for the rowersment of a camp by was backed upon as all right. What he had been in the past

was nothing ever to his tentmate. There was a big shanty in the center of our village which was occupied as a store, suison, bank and general renderyour after working hours. I was in there one afternson just before the miners knocked off work when a stranger quietly entered. He had come by the trall and alone, but ho, one had noticed him. He was a slim lights weight man, and though clothed in rough garb you could see at once that he was not a miner. He was sunburned and unkempt, but that was to be expected out there. He was talking with the steerheeper as I entered asking after just such a man as Big Jim Davis. His face struck me pleasantly enough, out there was a something in his gray eyes to remind you of a wounded beast. and a something in his volce to satisfy on that he would be a pitiless enemy.

He went out before I did. Where he ept himself for the next hour I never earned. The boys had knocked off, washed up and eaten supper, and about twenty of us had lounged into the store for a smoke and a talk, when the little man suddenly showed up. This, mind you, was three months after Big Jim's coming. Jim sat on a box facing the door, which was open. I happened to be looking at him, and I suddenly saw his face grow pale and his jaw drop, I looked over to the door and there stood the stranger. He had a keering sort of smile on his face, and was looking only at Big Jim. In ten seconds all conversation had ceased. We instinctively felt that the two were enemies and that the little man had finally trailed Big Jim down.

It was fully two minutes before the stranger moved or spoke. Then he stepped forward until close to Big Jim

"It has been over two years, but I've run you down at last." Davis looked at him as one who sees a

specter, but made no reply. You have skulked and designd like a coward!" continued the little man in the same quiet voice, "but you'll be a man now, of course. The boys will see fair play. Shall it be pisted or knife?" If Big Jim's eyes hadn't been wide

open we might have thought him a dead man. You never saw terror more plainly written on a human face.

"It's a little affair of our own, gentlemen, explained the stranger, as he turned to us. "I've traveled thousands miles while looking for Big Jim. I've been hunting him down, to kill or be killed. This world isn't big enough for both of us. Arrange the details to suit the crowd.

Not one of us had spoken. Just as the stranger finished Big Jim recovered from his stupor and made a move for his pistol. Like a flash of lightning the little man had him covered, and then he laughed a harsh, dry laugh and said: "I ought to shoot you down like a dog. but I'll give your show. Come out doors.

Shall it be this or that knife?"

Big Jim turned white again and relapsed into his former state of dumbness. The stranger surveyed him in disgust and contempt, and by and by turned to us and said:

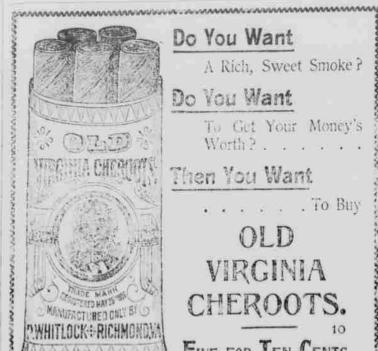
"Back in the states this white-livered coward betrayed my confidence and wrecked my home and my life. Even his dead body would disgrace your diggings. Come, Jim!"

He stepped back and beckened to Davis, who slowly followed, staring like one who walks in his sleep. The little man backed to the door-out of it into the moonlight, and then started up the trail. Davis followed like a dog, never looking to the right or to the left-mak ing not the slightest move to draw his weapon. It was as if he had been mes merized. Something of that same feeling was upon all the rest of us, for we stood at the door, speechless and amazed. and looked after the pair until they were out of sight. It was like a dream, and men rubbed their eyes as if heavy

Up the hill-around the great black rock-past the tree on which we hung Taylor for murder, and then they were out of sight. The stranger we never saw again. A month later a prospector found Big Jim's skeleton in a ravine two miles away.-N. Y. Sun.

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